

December 10, 2008: Sanchez Commemorates International Human Rights Day

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Sanchez on 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "We Must Protect the Fundamental Rights of All Individuals Around the World"

Sanchez advocates for the release of imprisoned democracy activists Pham Thanh Nghien and Blogger Dieu Cay

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Representative Loretta Sanchez (D-Garden Grove), Co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Vietnam, led other Members of Congress in commemorating International Human Rights Day and the 60th Anniversary of when the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

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On the occasion of International Human Rights Day, Sanchez underscored the basic freedoms that Vietnamese citizens are denied by the Communist Government of Vietnam. She also urged Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung to uphold its pledges to respect international norms, respect all individuals' human rights, and release democracy activists Pham Thanh Nghien, Nguyen Hoang Hai and all other political prisoners.

Below is the full text of the letter. A PDF copy is also attached.

December 10, 2008

His Excellency

Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung

c/o Embassy of Vietnam

1233 20th Street, NW #400

Washington, DC 20036

Dear Prime Minister Dung,

On December 10, 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights laying the foundation for protecting the fundamental rights of all individuals around the world. Today, we stand together on 2008 Human Rights Day to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of this document and to further urge all governments to uphold the principles established in the Declaration.

As Members of Congress, we are concerned by the ongoing human rights violations occurring around the world, especially in Vietnam. Despite its pledges to respect international norms, the Government of Vietnam continues to arrest and imprison individuals for exercising their freedom of speech and right to assemble.

Pham Thanh Nghien is a 31 year old democracy activist in Vietnam. She is currently being detained without trial in Tran Phu prison located in Hai Phong. Her detention occurred after she submitted a request to hold peaceful demonstrations. In addition, she has been targeted by Vietnamese authorities for providing humanitarian aid to the families of fishermen who were reportedly attacked in Vietnamese waters by Chinese naval ships. Nghien continuously fights for her freedom of expression and assembly in Vietnam despite its consequences.

Nguyen Hoang Hai, known under his blogging name Dieu Cay, is an internet activist in Vietnam sent to prison because of his writings and peaceful advocacy. Dieu Cay was at the forefront of a movement of citizen journalists, reporting on issues of national concern such as corruption, worker exploitation, and police brutality. He was arrested in April while calling for a boycott of the Olympic Torch Relay about to make its way through Vietnam.

Under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Pham Thanh Nghien and Dieu Cay have the freedom to assemble, protest and speak freely. The Government of Vietnam has not only adopted this Declaration but has also made additional commitments to uphold individual liberties. As Members of Congress, we strongly urge the Government of Vietnam to release Pham Thanh Nghien, Nguyen Hoang Hai and all other political prisoners. We urge Hanoi to recognize and recommit itself to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Sixty years ago, the international community recognized that all persons are born with fundamental rights and it is our collective responsibility to uphold those rights. Pham Thanh Nghien and Dieu Cay were born with these same rights, but are being punished for exercising those liberties. Human rights apply to every single individual and it is time that the Government of Vietnam recognizes and upholds these rights.

Respectfully,

Loretta Sanchez
Member of Congress

Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress

John Olver
Member of Congress

Maurice Hinchey
Member of Congress

Janice Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress

cc: His Excellency Nguyen Minh Triet, President of Vietnam

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State

The Honorable Michael Michalak, Ambassador

Amnesty International USA

Edward Royce

Member of Congress

Daniel Lungren

Member of Congress